IN THE CLAIMS:

Please cancel claims 1 to 4 and 19 without prejudice and amend the claims as follows:

1. (cancelled)

2. (cancelled)

3. (cancelled)

4. (cancelled)

5. (currently amended) A method for producing a tube of synthetic silica glass in a vertical drawing method, said method comprising:

supplying a silica glass mass continuously to a heating zone and softening the silica glass mass therein, and

drawing a tube strand continuously off from a softened region of said silica glass mass,

said tube strand having an inner bore therein, a scavenging gas being circulated through the inner bore of said tube strand, and

obtaining a silica glass tube by cutting said tube strand to length,

wherein the scavenging gas has a water content of less than 100 wtppb, and wherein a front end of the tube strand **distal to the softened region** is closed by a flow obstacle **that** ~~**which**~~ is permeable to the scavenging gas and **that** ~~**which**~~ reduces flow of the scavenging gas flowing therethrough.

6. (previously presented) The method according to claim 5, wherein the scavenging gas has a water content of less than 30 wtppb.

7. (previously presented) The method according to claim 5, wherein the flow obstacle is formed by a plug which projects into the inner bore of the tube strand and which narrows a cross-section of flow scavenging gas.

8. (previously presented) The method according to claim 6, wherein the flow obstacle is produced by a gas curtain acting on the front end of the tube strand.

9. (previously presented) The method according to claim 5, wherein the silica glass mass is provided in the form of a hollow cylinder which, starting with a front end thereof, is continuously fed to the heating zone and softened therein in portions, and the tube strand is continuously drawn off from the softened region, the hollow cylinder being elongated to at least 5 times its initial length.

10. (previously presented) The method according to claim 9, wherein the hollow cylinder is elongated to at least 20 times its initial length.

11. (previously presented) The method according to claim 5, wherein the scavenging gas contains a gaseous drying agent.

12. (previously presented) The method according to claim 5, wherein the scavenging gas is subjected to a drying process before being introduced into the inner bore of the tube strand.

13. (previously presented) The method according to claim 5, wherein the volume flow of the scavenging gas through the inner bore is not more than 80 l/min.

14. (previously presented) The method according to claim 5, wherein an external scavenging gas flows around the outer cladding of the tube strand in the region of the heating zone, the external scavenging gas having a water content, the water content of the scavenging gas being lower by at least a factor of 10 than the water content of the external scavenging gas.

15. (currently amended) The method according to claim 6, wherein an external scavenging gas flows around the outer cladding of the tube strand in the region of the heating zone~~, the same gas being used as~~ both the scavenging gas and ~~as~~ the external scavenging gas **being of the same gas composition**.

16. (previously presented) The method according to claim 14, wherein the external scavenging gas flows around the outer cladding of the tube strand at least for a duration of time such that said strand is cooled down to a temperature below 900° C.

17. (previously presented) The method according to claim 5, wherein the silica glass tube is subjected to an OH reduction treatment at a temperature of at least 900° C. in a water-free atmosphere or in vacuum.

18. (previously presented) The method according to claim 17, wherein the OH reduction treatment includes a treatment in a deuterium-containing atmosphere.

19. (cancelled)

20. (previously presented) The method according to claim 5, wherein the scavenging gas contains a gaseous drying agent comprising a chlorine-containing gas.

21. (previously presented) A method of forming a tubular glass member, said method comprising:

forming a silica glass tube according to the method of claim 5; and

depositing SiO_2 layers on the silica glass tube in the inner bore using MCVD with said silica glass tube being used as a substrate tube for said MCVD.